

STUDY AND PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES TO RODION SHCHEDRIN'S 24 PRELUDES AND FUGUES

By

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Abstract

The purpose of my document is to find the key features of Rodion Shchedrin's 24 Preludes and Fugues, and present performance suggestions to the Preludes of Volume I. This project will be divided into three chapters.

Chapter 1 will introduce Shchedrin's musical background and the development of his musical style.

Chapter 2 will discuss the influences of Johann Sebastian Bach and Dmitri Shostakovich's preludes and fugues, a feature of Shchedrin's 24 Preludes and Fugues, and an interesting comparison of Volumes I and II. Shostakovich, one of the earliest composers to write a set of preludes and fugues in the twentieth-century, inspired Shchedrin to compose a similar piece. Shostakovich's live performance of his own preludes and fugues influenced Shchedrin to compose 24 Preludes and Fugues using a variety of genres, characters, and polyphonic techniques. Shchedrin's own unique style can be seen in his preludes that demonstrate various musical genres, and forms. For instance, the recitative style can be seen in Prelude XVII where he indicates "*espress. Recitando*". Also, some of the preludes and fugues have a number of sudden tempo changes. One of the examples can be seen in Prelude XIV which starts *Presto* and ends *Allegro*.

Chapter 3 will deal with performance guidelines to the Preludes of Volume I.

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Chapter 1

Rodion Konstantinovich Shchedrin was born in Moscow in 1932. From an early age, Shchedrin had opportunities to take music classes in violin, choir, piano, music theory, and composition. This early experience led him to compose in a variety of musical genres, including opera, ballet, symphony, a concerto for solo instrument with orchestra, vocal music, piano music, and ensemble works. He started to study at Moscow Choir College for Boys majoring in composition. In the college, his piano teacher, Gregory Dinor, introduced him to Jacob Flier, the renowned Russian pianist and professor at the Moscow Conservatory. In 1950 Shchedrin entered the Moscow Conservatory majoring in piano as well as theory/composition. His major professors in piano and composition were Flier and Shaporin. His compositional style was developed during the “Socialist Realism” period when composers were required to use folk idioms in order to demonstrate a strong relationship with the people. Shchedrin developed his interest in Russian folk music, especially the “chastushka” which is characterized by humor, satire or irony. His early polyphonic style can be seen in his Piano Sonata No. 1 in C major (1962). His mature polyphonic style can be seen in 24 Preludes and Fugues Volume 1 (1964), Volume 2 (1970) for the piano, and *Polyphonic Notebook* (1972).

Shchedrin’s 24 Preludes and Fugues are influenced by those of Johann Sebastian Bach and Dmitri Shostakovich. Shostakovich was the one of the earliest twentieth-century composers to write preludes and fugues in all twelve keys. Shchedrin heard him play his preludes and fugues at the Moscow Conservatoire. Shchedrin later commented:

In 1951 in underground facilities of the Composers Union of the USSR, Dmitri Shostakovich played his new composition *Twenty-Four Preludes and Fugues*. He had just finished them. I, still a second-year student at the Conservatory, was present at that memorable performance. Shostakovich used his manuscript and I could feel nervousness in his playing. He was adjusting his glasses often, while picking some wrong notes and at times using harsh *forte*. However, the composition had such a strong impact on me that I

was inspired to write a similar cycle.¹

Shchedrin's 24 Preludes and Fugues were written between 1964 and 1970 and dedicated to his father, Konstantin Mikhailovich Shchedrin. The key cycle of Shchedrin's 24 Preludes and Fugues is the same as Shostakovich's, the circle of fifths of paired relative major and minor keys.² Volume I uses the sharp keys starting on C major, and Volume II uses the flat keys starting on G flat major. Shchedrin divided the set into two volumes by having twelve sets in each volume and his fugues have two to five voices, but most of them were written in three voices. In all of these works, Shchedrin uses Baroque polyphonic techniques such as augmentation, diminution, inversion, and stretto.

¹ Valentina Kholopova. *Way on a Center; Composer Rodion Shchedrin*. Moscow: Kompozitor. 2000, 276.

² Yun-Jin Seo. "Three Cycles of 24 Preludes and Fugues by Russian Composers: D. Shostakovich, R. Shchedrin and S.Slonimsky" (D.M.A. thesis, The University of Texas at Austin, 2003), 8.

Chapter 2

I have selected a variety of categories to explain the important features of Shchedrin's Preludes and Fugues.

I. The connection between Bach, Shostakovich, and Shchedrin's pieces

i. The use of pedal point

Bach used the pedal point near the end of pieces to reestablish the governing tonality following extensive modulations. One of the differences between the organ and the piano is that the organ can produce sound without decay in volume. Since Bach was a great organist, he often used this organ effect in his pieces. (Example 1)



Example 1. Bach, Fugue II in C minor, BWV 847, mm. 29-31

Example 2 and 3 show the pedal point near the end of the pieces. Unlike the organ, the piano has a limited sustaining capability. I would suggest using the sostenuto pedal on the piano in order to hold the bass note separately.



Example 2. Shostakovich, Fugue VII, Op. 87, mm 95-99



Example 3. Shchedrin, Fugue XXI, mm. 58-61

ii. The use of three staves

Many organ pieces are written in the three staves because the bottom line is for the pedal.

Below is an example from Bach (Example 4). It is impossible to perform this piece without the foot pedal.



Example 4. J.S. Bach, Fantasia in C Major, BWV 570, mm. 1-6

Example 5 and 6 by Shostakovich and Shchedrin respectively are written in the three staves which should be played on the piano. It is impossible to play this piece on the organ because of the limitation of its register. The use of three staves makes the music sound richer because of its thick texture and the wider use of the register.



Example 5. Shostakovich, Prelude IX, Op. 87, mm. 1-4



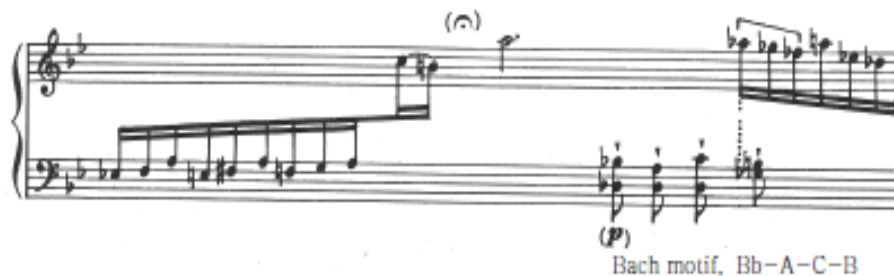
Example 6. Shchedrin, Fugue XX, mm. 33-34

iii. Reminiscence of Bach

Shchedrin's Prelude and Fugue XXI show his respect for J.S. Bach. The series of notes, B flat, A, C, and B natural, spell out Bach's name in musical pitches. We can see the Bach motif in the left hand in this prelude. (Example 7)



J.S. Bach's motif



Example 7. Shchedrin, Prelude XXI, system 4

Fugue XXI uses a cantus firmus (Example 8), which is any preexisting melody used as the basis for a polyphonic composition since the 11th century. Shchedrin modifies this compositional technique by putting his own subject first, then adding the cantus firmus in the place where the episode is usually found. The melody used for the cantus firmus is taken from J.S. Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier Book II, No. 21 Fugue (Example 9). Shchedrin augmented

Bach's theme.



Example 8. Shchedrin, Fugue XXI, mm. 10-15



Example 9. J.S. Bach, Fugue XXI, Book II, mm. 1-7

II. The influence of Shostakovich's 24 Preludes and Fugues

Shostakovich directly inspired Shchedrin to compose the similar work. Here are similarities between their works.

i. Changing meter



Example 10. Shostakovich, Fugue XV, Op. 87, mm. 28-33



Example 11. Shchedrin's Prelude VIII, mm. 1-

ii. The use of *Attaca*

Some Preludes and Fugues by Shostakovich and Shchedrin are connected with *attacca* which indicates to the performer to play without pause. The effect of using *attacca* is that the prelude and fugue sound unified.



Example 12. Shostakovich, Prelude X, Op. 87, mm. 53-54



Example 13. Shchedrin, Prelude XIX, mm. 71-76

III. Shchedrin's unique compositional style

Even though Shchedrin's 24 Preludes and Fugues were influenced by Bach and Shostakovich, Shchedrin makes this work unique by combining aspects of past practice with his own compositional style and modern techniques.

i. Contrasting idea

Prelude I (Ternary form, A-B-A'-Coda) shows striking contrasts in dynamics, articulation, and note duration. It starts with an anacrusis played *f* and *staccato*. The left hand then plays the long tonic note *p* connected by a tie. (Example 14) After taking two and half beat rests in measure 5, the B section starts with continuing sixteenth notes in measure 6 where Shchedrin gives us a contrasting idea between stasis and activity.



Example 14. Shchedrin, Prelude I, mm. 1-6

Example 15 also shows ideas marked by contrasts in dynamic and articulation. The first two beats are written in accented chromatic scales. However, the last two beats have a long C note in the bass which indicates the key of the piece with *p* connected by a tie.



Example 15. Shchedrin, Prelude I mm. 15-17

In Fugue I (Example 16), we can feel the contrasting idea in the note duration demonstrated by the first two notes which are long (half notes), and the next five which are very short (sixteenth

notes).



Example 16. Shchedrin, Fugue I, mm 1-3

And this piece shows considerable dynamic contrast. (Example 17)



Example 17. Shchedrin, Fugue I, mm. 21-23

ii. Features of Preludes in Volume I

Similar to J.S. Bach's Preludes (Example 18), Shchedrin limits himself to write one or two musical ideas in many of the Preludes in Volume I (Example 19). In both examples, the right hand plays continuing sixteenth notes whereas the left hand plays continuing eighth notes.



Example 18. J.S. Bach Prelude VI in d minor, BWV 851, mm.1-4



Example 19. Shchedrin, Prelude VII, mm. 1-9

The Preludes in Volume I have distinct musical forms. For example, Prelude III is in double binary form, A (m.m 1 – 6) B (m.m 7-8) A' (m.m 9-12) B' (m.m13-14) with Coda (m.m 15-16). The A section seems to be influenced by the *siciliana*, which is in a slow 6/8 or 12/8 time with lilting rhythms, making it somewhat resemble a slow jig or tarantella, and is usually in a minor key. It was used for arias in Baroque operas, and often appears as a movement in instrumental works.³ (Example 20)



Example 20. Shchedrin, Prelude III, mm. 1-7

In addition, Shchedrin uses Baroque compositional techniques with twelve tones. For example,

3 Andrew Haringer. *The Oxford Handbook of Topic Theory*, edited by Danuta Mirka, London: Oxford University Press. ISBN 978-0199841578. 2014, 204.

Prelude IV uses canon (Example 21) and Prelude X uses ostinato employed by the left hand.
(Example 22)



Example 21. Prelude IV, mm. 1-10, canon

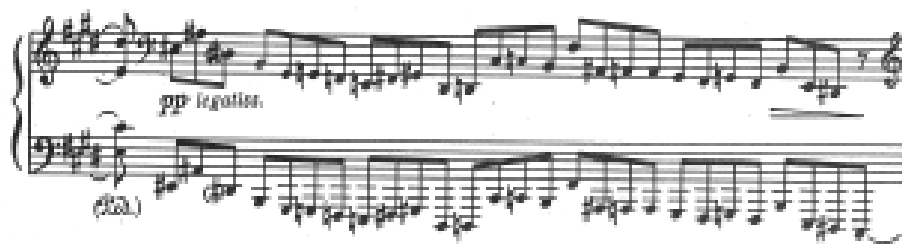
Example 22. Shchedrin, Prelude XX, mm. 1-2, ostinato

Prelude IX *Quasi improvisato* is unique because it does not have a time signature, tempo marking, or measures. On the other hand, the overall structure of A-B-A'-B' (double binary

form) is clear. The A and B sections are contrast in register, atmosphere, and texture. Interestingly, this Prelude gives a foreshadowing of the following fugue by presenting the notes of the theme in section B. The mood of the Prelude starts serenely (Example 23, A section), but it is interrupted by dark mood that contains the subject of the following fugue (Example 24, B section).



Example 23. Shchedrin, Prelude IX, system 1



Example 24. Shchedrin, Prelude IX, system 3

Also B' (Example 25) is presented in retrograde of B to conclude the prelude. Heinrich Jalowetz (1882-1946), an Austrian musicologist and conductor, discussed the effect of the use retrograde in twelve-tone technique: "The technique serves two main functions. One is to provide a substitute for classical tonality, with all its melodic and harmonic consequences. The second function is to provide a means of interrelationship. This is done by presenting the row not only in normal position but in inversion, retrogression, and retrograde inversion. The music derives a strict inner cohesion through the artful treatment of such relationships, even though the listener may often be unable to follow what is happening." ⁴

⁴ Heinrich Jalowetz, "On the Spontaneity of Schoenberg's Music," *Musical Quarterly* 30, no. 4. (1944): 394.



Example 25. Shchedrin, Prelude IX, system 6

iii. Features of Preludes in Volume II

There is a variety of musical forms representative in the Preludes in Volume II. These include changing meter and tempo, and expressing human voices by using the recitativo style. Some of the pieces illustrate the improvisational style which is essential skill for the musician during the Renaissance and Baroque periods. Throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, improvised counterpoint over a cantus firmus constituted a part of every musician's education, and is regarded as the most important kind of unwritten music before the Baroque period.⁵

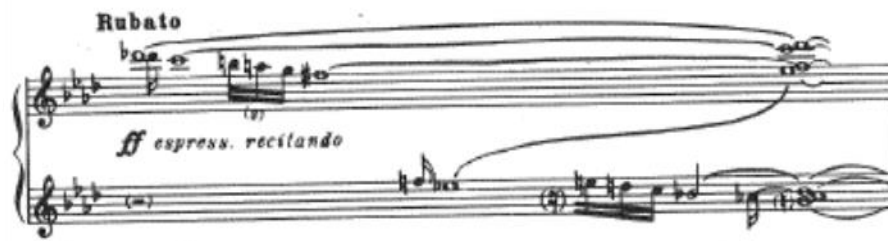
- Changing tempo



Example 26. Shchedrin, Prelude XXII, mm. 1-2

⁵ Howard Mayer Brown. *Embellishing Sixteenth-Century Music*. Early Music Series 1. London: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-323175-1. 1976.

- Recitativo style



Example 27. Shchedrin, Prelude XVII, mm. 1

- Cadenza style



Example 28. Shchedrin, Prelude XX, System 5 – 8

- Improvisational style



Example 29. Shchedrin, Prelude XV, System 3,4

iv. The subjects of fugues

In Fugue II, the first measure starts with repeated notes. The second two measures use all twelve tones without repeat. Since all twelve notes are equally important in the twelve tone system, no note is usually repeated. It is a very interesting and contrasting idea to use the twelve tones right after the repeated notes.



Example 30. Shchedrin, Fugue II, mm. 1-5

In Fugue III, the four measures subject shows a G major scale starting on the leading tone. This subject can be divided into two parts, one having *marcato* which is often interpreted to suggest a sharp attack tapering to the original dynamic⁶ and the other having an accented descending scale shown throughout this piece. In addition, unlike its time signature, 3/4, the theme sounds

⁶ Walter Piston, *Orchestration* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1955), 20.

like in 6/8, which is hemiola. (Example 31)



Example 31. Shchedrin, Fugue III, mm. 1-4

It feels more like 3/4 from measure 13 because of the bass. (Example 32)



Example 32. Shchedrin, Fugue III, mm. 13-16

In Fugue VIII, the longer notes, C # B A G# F# E D C#, indicate the natural scale of F sharp minor. (Example 33)



Example 33. Shchedrin, Fugue VIII, mm. 1-6

The long eight measure theme in Fugue IX is written using all twelve tones. The musical ideas used in this theme include syncopation, anticipation, octave interval, and repeated notes. These features are used throughout the piece. (Example 34) Interestingly, J.S. Bach also used all

twelve pitches in the Well-Tempered Clavier, Book I, Fugue No 24 in B Minor, BWV 869.



Example 34, Shchedrin, Fugue IX, mm. 1-8

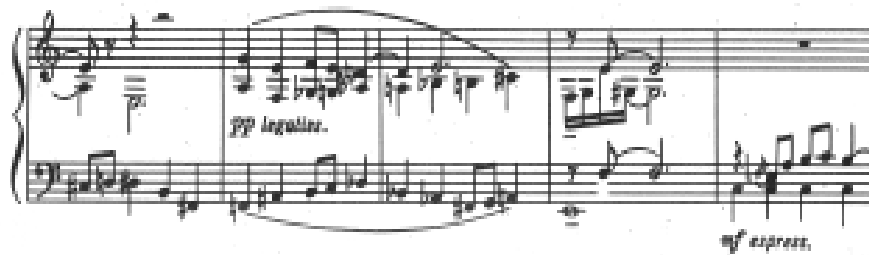
v. Episode

In contrast to the traditional fugue model, Fugue I does not have the episode following the conclusion of the exposition in measure 12. Perhaps that is the reason why Shchedrin indicates *distinto thema* in measure 13. (Example 35)



Example 35. Shchedrin, Fugue I, mm.13-14

Fugue II has the episode after the exposition in measure 11 – 13 with twelve tone bass line in measures 11 -12. (Example 36)



Example 36. Shchedrin, Fugue II, mm. 10-14

This episode is played in low register in measure 40 with *forte* followed by *sf* in measure 42.

This dramatic register and dynamic effect keep going with *dim.* with holding damper pedal in measure 42 – 44. (Example 37)



Example 37. Shchedrin, Fugue II, mm. 40-43

The interesting character of Fugue II is that the episode serves the climax and the ending of the piece, which is the striking contrast to the traditional fugue model. (Example 38)



Example 38. Shchedrin, Fugue II, mm. 60-63

Shchedrin elaborates the importance of the episode by ending Fugue II with the episode.

vi. Inverted Examples

It is a great demonstration of virtuoso counterpoint that the entire Preludes and Fugues I and XXIV are inverted. (Example 39-40)



Example 39. Shchedrin, Prelude I, mm. 1-3



Example 40. Shchedrin, Prelude XXIV, mm. 1-3



Example 41. Shchedrin, Fugue I, mm. 1-3



Example 42. Shchedrin, Fugue XXIV, mm. 1-2

Fugue X is a good example of dynamic inversion. The entry of the first exposition is in *p* and the episode comes in *f* (Examples 43, 44). However the second exposition reverses the dynamic order by presenting the subjects in *f* and the episode in *p*. (Examples 45, 46)



Example 43, Shchedrin, Fugue X, mm. 1-3



Example 44, Shchedrin, Fugue X, mm. 10-1



Example 45, Shchedrin, Fugue X, mm. 13-15



Example 46, Shchedrin, Fugue X, mm. 22-23

vii. Pieces that suggest the combination of the piano and organ

The *crescendo* and *decrescendo* (Example 47) seem to suit for piano playing whereas the holding of whole notes without dynamic changes seems to suggest a style devised from organ playing.



Example 47. Shchedrin, Prelude XVII, mm. 5-6

Example 48 shows the organ effect by using the pedal point. Unlike Bach's purpose to use the pedal point (p. 3), Shchedrin emphasizes the dissonance.



Example 48. Shchedrin, Fugue XIV, mm. 100-105

Chapter 3

I will introduce that main performance issues that I have faced in Preludes of Volume I and offer the performance guidelines.

In Prelude I, holding the rest for the proper amount of time plays an important role because it is used to show the contrast between stasis and activity especially in measures 5 and 6. (Example 49)



Example 49, Shchedrin, Prelude I, mm. 4-6

The main performance challenge of Prelude I is to keep a steady beat in measures 9-12 (Example 50). It is not easy to keep a steady beat right after playing continuous sixteenth notes. Practice with a metronome will be helpful.



Example 50. Shchedrin Prelude I, mm. 9-12

In Prelude II, hemiola is presented in measures 13-14. In order to convey the feeling of the hemiola, the performer should emphasis the start of every two eight notes. (Example 51)



Example 51. Shchedrin, Prelude II, mm. 12-16

Prelude III requires the performer to present the melancholy melody beautifully with careful attention to dynamic changes in measures 1-6. In the *più mosso* part, it is interesting to hear the descending scales in both hands. The right hand plays F#, E, D, C, all whole steps and left hand plays C#, C, B, A #, all half steps. (Example 52)



Example 52. Shchedrin, Prelude III, mm. 1-7

The extreme dynamics of the last two measures as well as all the markings indicate that Shchedrin wants the performers work very hard to express all the details and make sure that the listeners are involved in the last two measures. (Example 53)



Example 53. Shchedrin, Prelude III, mm. 15-16

Prelude IV is written in canon. The theme is initially presented in the eighth notes (Example 54) and later presented in diminution (Example 55) and augmentation (Example 56). The performer should always bring out the theme.



Example 54. Shchedrin, Prelude IV, mm. 1-5



Example 55. Shchedrin, Prelude IV, mm. 25-26



Example 56. Shchedrin, Prelude IV, mm. 29-32

In order to play Prelude V, the performer should decide what fingering is the most comfortable. I am sharing my fingering. (Example 57) Another alternative fingering, 343212 343212 354312 34321234, might work better for someone else. In order to play *pp* in this passage, my suggestion would be to play with high wrist and fingers are very close to the keys.



Example 57. Shchedrin, Prelude V, mm. 1

Prelude VI (Example 58) looks like a chorale written for four voices. The player should be aware of the contrary motion between the soprano and bass lines in the measures 1-7. Example 60 is a church hymn that has a similar rhythmic pattern.



Example 58. Shchedrin, Prelude VI, mm1-7

JULIA C. COFF
DUTCH MELODY
ARR. EDWARD KREMER

1. We praise Thee, O God, our Re - deem - er, Cre - a - tor, In
2. We wor - ship Thee, God of our fa - thers, we bless Thee, Thru
3. With voic - es u - nit - ed our prais - es we of - fer To

Example 59. Hymn No. 27, "We Praise Thee, O God, Our Redeemer"

In order to perform the continuing sixteenth note played by the right hand in Prelude VII (Example 60), the performer needs to select a good fingering first. This prelude seems similar to following examples 61, 62 by J.S. Bach.

Allegro (♩ = 128 - 132)

Example 60. Shchedrin, Prelude VII, mm.1-9



Example 61. J.S. Bach, Prelude III in C sharp major, BWV 848, mm.1-7



Example 62. J.S. Bach, Prelude V in D major, BWV 850, mm.1-2

Prelude VIII is a good example of dotted rhythm. The left hand is challenging both technically and musically because of the large intervals and dynamic changes. The performer should listen carefully to avoid playing too loud when the left hand plays the lower register in measure 9.



Example 63. Shchedrin, Prelude VIII, mm. 8-11

Prelude IX expresses mysterious feelings in B part (Example 64). Since this part is played in low register, I recommend the performer to change the damper pedal in every three to four notes to avoid sounding too blurry.



Example 64. Shchedrin, Prelude IX, system 3

Prelude X is based on an ostinato played by the left hand. The main challenge is to keep the same tempo and avoid slowing down when the right hand's rhythmic pattern goes from eighth to sixteenth and thirty second notes. This is a wonderful piece to learn how to play continuing notes softly.



Example 65. Shchedrin, Prelude X, mm. 6

Prelude XI starts with a sudden dynamic change from *sf* to *p*. This piece is written in four voices, but it is different from the chorale or hymn song of Prelude VI because this piece is difficult to sing. This is more like keyboard music with ties and the ornamentation of sixteenth notes.



Example 66. Shchedrin, Prelude XI, mm. 1-4

Prelude XII is the most technically challenging prelude in Volume I. This work sounds very aggressive and active with continuous fast sixteenth notes. This piece sounds like an etude for the right hand. Practicing in dotted rhythm, and staccato might be helpful by emphasizing the first note in each beat and relax the other three notes.

The musical score for Example 67, Shchedrin, Prelude XII, mm. 1-6, is presented in three systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece in 2/4 time, marked 'Allegro' with a tempo of 138-142 bpm. The right hand (RH) starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic, playing a series of fast sixteenth notes. The left hand (LH) enters with a piano (*pp*) dynamic, marked 'ma articolato'. The second system continues the RH's sixteenth-note pattern, with fingerings (1-5) and accents indicated. The LH continues with a more active bass line. The third system shows the RH's pattern continuing, with fingerings and accents. The LH continues with a more active bass line. The score is in 2/4 time, marked 'Allegro' with a tempo of 138-142 bpm.

Example 67. Shchedrin, Prelude XII, mm. 1-6

Conclusion

I believe Shchedrin has written a monumental set of Preludes and Fugues. Although we can see the influence of Bach and Shostakovich, Shchedrin expressed his own musical ideas throughout the set. Shchedrin shows his great interest in contrasting ideas such as active and static movement, and thin and thick texture. We notice that his writing style seems less formal and unexpected in Volume II because of more changes in meter and tempo. In addition, the mixture of traditional style with twelve tone technique is interesting. Also, the mixture of the organ and piano technique suggests the musical integration of the Baroque and Twentieth centuries.

This whole set offers piano teachers many opportunities for their students to learn musical concepts such as A B A form, binary form, canon, recitativo style, ostinato, and chorales. I recommend that Prelude and Fugue III and XII in Volume I would be excellent choices for the auditions or competitions. These works will capture the jury and audience's attention because these works are extremely challenging both technically and musically. A number of music students in Russia have played Shchedrin's Prelude and Fugue as their audition and recital pieces.

Shchedrin recorded Volume I in 1966 and Volume II in 1971. He gave the first performance of the entire sets in 1971. A British concert pianist, Murray McLachlan (1965) also recorded the complete cycle in 1994 and commented:

From the opening bars of the first Prelude and Fugue (C major) there can be no doubt that this cycle is marked by clarity and lucidity, pianistic and musical practicality, technical and contrapuntal virtuosity as well as sincerity and depth of feeling. There is also a liberal sprinkling of good humour, wit and a feeling of the encyclopedic and all encompassing that certainly takes one's breath away!⁷

⁷ Murray McLachlan, liner notes to Rodion Shchedrin, *24 Preludes and Fugues*, Olympia OCD 438 (1994).

Shchedrin's 24 Preludes and Fugues have not been performed often in the United States and Asia. I hope my document encourages more pianists to perform and music teachers to teach this great music.

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